



# Catholic Faith, Life & Creed

Doctrinal Catechesis Sessions for adults based on  
the Church Year, the Liturgy, & the Sunday Scriptures

## Breaking Open the Word

by Mary Birmingham

## 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time | Year C



Christ and the Last Supper: a wall painting of the west wall of the St. Nicetas Church, Macedonia. 14<sup>th</sup> c.  
(When the Lord returns he will serve his guests who recline at table. The glorified Christ will serve his disciples the eschatological banquet.)



## Begin with the Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

### Opening Prayer

Option 1. Use Opening Prayer from the Sunday Liturgy.

Option 2.

### Oblatio Sui

*Lord, take all my freedom.  
Accept my memory,  
my understanding,  
And my entire will.  
You have given me all that I have or hold dear.  
I return it to you,  
that it may be governed by your will.  
Give me only your grace  
and the gift of loving you,  
And I will be rich enough;  
I will ask for nothing more.  
Amen.*

**Catholic  
Faith, Life  
& Creed**  
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Breaking Open the  
Word worksheets  
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Faith, Life, & Creed*  
Doctrinal Sessions.

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## Liturgical Context

- ▶ Today's liturgy is an invitation to grow in faith.
- ▶ It is also a meditation on God's ongoing salvation—God's saving power throughout history and the ongoing salvation of the present and future.
- ▶ The Gospels of these weeks are from the section of Luke's Gospel that takes place "on the way to Jerusalem." It is a journey every Christian must take.

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions in groups of two, and then surface insights in the wider group.

- ▶ What spoke to your heart in today's liturgy?
- ▶ What reading, symbol, music, homily, spoke to you and why did it speak to you?
- ▶ What touched you the most in today's Gospel?

If time is a consideration, omit reflection on one of the readings.

## Reading 1: Wisdom 18:6-9

- ▶ Solomon is the purported author of the Book of Wisdom even though he lived a thousand years before it was written.
- ▶ The book was written about the first century in Hellenistic Alexandria and was influenced by this intellectual, political, academic and cosmopolitan trade center.
- ▶ Jews of the diaspora settled in this area and were enculturated by pagan influences and by the elite intellectualism of the day.
- ▶ The book was written as a call to faith—a renewal of faith. Jewish practice and way of life was at stake. The temptation to appropriate a Hellenistic way of life was hard to resist. The book sought to strengthen Jewish identity.
- ▶ Today's reading recalls salvation history; the great events of that history. It remembers the exodus out of Egypt in which God delivered the Israelites and led them through the desert to the Promised Land.
- ▶ The annual celebration is a testament to the power of God to save and the providential care, protection and deliverance he offers to his people.
- ▶ The saving events of salvation history illustrate that the Jewish people truly are heirs to the promises made to Abraham, their father in faith.



## Mystagogy

reflection on the mysteries

Catechist invites participants to respond to one or more of the following questions in groups of two, and then surface brief insights in the wider group. Catechist responds with a "brief" story from his or her life. See appendix #1 for an example.

- ▶ Consider your own cultural situation. Have you ever experienced being caught up in "what everyone else was doing" wholesome or not wholesome, good or bad, wise or not wise, healthy or unhealthy? How easy or difficult is it to withstand

things that are not wholesome, not good, not wise or not healthy? What strategies can a person make to resist negative choices?

- ▶ Why was it important for the author of this reading to remind the people of their history, their identity?
- ▶ Consider all the ethnic groups today that struggle to maintain their identity—what happens when that identity is threatened? What are the implications for us as Catholics?
- ▶ In what way is this a message for you, today, on your Christian journey?
- ▶ What is the Good News in this reading?

## Second Reading: Hebrews 11, 1-2.8-19 or 11,1-2. 8-12

- ▶ Scholars maintain that Paul is not the author of the Letter to the Hebrews; it was written between the years 80-90 by a Hellenistic Christian.
- ▶ Scholars further believe that Jewish Christians were the primary audience. Gentiles would have had little understanding or knowledge of the Old Covenant that is the underlying context throughout the letter.
- ▶ The Letter to the Hebrews was written in response to the dangerous false teaching that threatened the community.
- ▶ The author insists that the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross supersedes all sacrifices in the Old Covenant.
- ▶ The Book of Hebrews holds up faith as the primary value in salvation history.
- ▶ Faith demands a response to God's promises. Faith requires believers to embrace and yield to God's will.
- ▶ If believers have faith, they too, like Abraham will go forward into the world, not knowing where they are going, but confident that God is leading them.
- ▶ The Letter to Hebrews is a catechism on faith; the author attempts to illustrate what faith is and describes what evidence exists that a person has it.
- ▶ He insists that evidence of faith in a person's life is assurance and conviction about that which the person places his or her faith.
- ▶ Persons of faith could be assured of their heritage—rightful possession of the Promised Land and eternal glory in heaven.



## Mystagogy reflection on the mysteries

Catechist invites participants to respond to one or more of the following questions in groups of two and then surface brief insights in the wider group. Catechist responds with a “brief” story or reflection from his or her life. See appendix #2 for an example.

- ▶ If faith requires that a person respond to God's will in their lives, how do you know what God's will is for you?
- ▶ If you were to describe a person of faith, how would you describe that person?



- ▶ If a person were charged with having faith, what evidence would there be to convict that person?
- ▶ Faith is a gift from God; we must cooperate with that freely given gift. In what way might you more fully cooperate with God's grace so that it will grow in you?
- ▶ Share an experience of faith in your life.

## Gospel: Luke 12, 13-21

Read or summarize the Gospel, perhaps provide a copy of the text for further reflection.

## Gospel Exegesis

Please note: catechist may intersperse the questions at the end of the exegesis throughout your presentation where appropriate.) Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions before presenting the exegesis.

- ▶ What specifically touched you in this Gospel?
- ▶ What does this Gospel mean to you?
- ▶ Jesus warns his disciples about the need to avoid hypocrisy.
- ▶ He cautions them about the persecution they will endure for being his disciple. (Recall, they are still on the road to Jerusalem.)
- ▶ He re-presents his catechism on perseverance, faith and endurance—they are to trust God to meet their needs.
- ▶ They are to let go of their worldly possessions, give to the poor and wait for Christ's return.
- ▶ Luke's intention is to clearly establish what it means to wait for the coming of the Son of Man. Detachment from worldly possessions is paramount. Constant vigilance is also important. They are to be ready for his coming no matter the day or the hour.
- ▶ When the Lord returns the glorified Jesus will serve his people the eschatological banquet. His guests will recline at table with him.
- ▶ Luke's twelfth chapter exhorts faithful leadership in the communities, the willingness to embrace the Paschal Mystery—to suffer for the sake of the Gospel, and detachment from worldly possessions and concerns.
- ▶ Jesus' common message to his disciples in Luke's Gospel is to sell their possessions and give to the poor. It is not an option for the faithful Christian. It is the radical call to discipleship.
- ▶ Jesus' showed by example that detachment and simplicity are the means to living a peace-filled, fruitful Christian life.
- ▶ "Let your belts be fastened around your waists and your lamps be burning ready" (vs. 35) refers to the ritual action set forth in the Law for the annual observance of Passover.
- ▶ Luke recalls the exodus because he wants his readers to know with certainty that Jesus' sacrifice on the cross is the New Covenant that replaces the Old Covenant God made with the people on Mount Sinai in which God promised he would be their God and they would be their people.

- ▶ Jesus is the New Passover.
- ▶ God completed his plan of salvation for the world through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Luke's community believed that Jesus' second coming would take place during the annual pasche--the Passover celebration.
- ▶ The reference to reclining at table was a recognition that Christ already reclines with them in the community's celebration of Eucharist. Then and now the Eucharist was and is understood as making present the resurrected presence of Christ. The celebration of Eucharist was and is understood as anamnesis—a remembering that makes present. Whenever Christians gather to tell the story and share the meal they re-present Christ's life, death, and resurrection in the Christian assembly in the species of bread and wine, the community, God's word and the priest.
- ▶ The parable Jesus tells in today's Gospel is an exhortation to be prepared. We do not know when the Master will return, so we must be ready at a moment's notice.
- ▶ Those who ignore the signs and refuse to be ready will be judged accordingly.
- ▶ Those who were not aware of the Master's promised return were not held *as* accountable—they would receive the least amount of punishment. They, however, would still be punished since ignorance does not seem to be an excuse.
- ▶ The obvious question to each of us remains: "Are we ready for the Master's return?"



## Mystagogy

### reflection on the mysteries

Catechist invites participants to respond to one or more of the following questions in small groups of four. Use the last three or four minutes to surface the insights in the wider group. Catechist begins by sharing story from his or her life. See appendix #3 for an example. (@ Ten-twelve minutes)

- ▶ We wait in hope for the second coming of Christ. We spend the entire season of Advent reflecting on that mystery. Today's Gospel invites our Ordinary Time reflection on it as well. Are we ready? Are you ready?
- ▶ What does it mean to you that we experience the resurrected presence of Christ in the Eucharist? What does that teach us about Eucharist? If you are fully initiated have you ever experienced Eucharist as the resurrected presence of Christ? If you are preparing for full initiation what does this teaching mean to you as you prepare to receive Christ in the Eucharist?
- ▶ How do you feel about the premise that ignorance is no excuse for not being ready for Christ's return? What are the implications of that premise?
- ▶ Jesus What does this Gospel teach us about possessions? What are the implications for our contemporary world today?
- ▶ What does Jesus want to teach about what it means to be a faithful disciple?

- ▶ Jesus invites disciples to practice detachment and simplicity. What does that mean to you? In what way, if any do you presently practice detachment from material possessions and a simple life style? What steps might you take adopt such a life style?
- ▶ What does this Gospel teach us about the Christian mission?

Catechist invites participants to silently reflect on the following question.

- ▶ After reflection on today's liturgy, what one thing is God asking of you at this time in your life?
- ▶ What obstacles stand in the way of following God's call?

### **CONCLUDING PRAYER**

Repeat OPENING PRAYER for this session OR

Minor rite: Blessing: 95-97.

## APPENDIX

#1. Faith in my life requires patient waiting for God's action and for God's revelation. My faith is tested to maximum limits when times are difficult and I am called to rely on God to lead me through the dark night.

One profound experience of testing my faith was the recent heart surgery of my grandbaby. We knew when he was born that he had a hole in his heart and would require surgery. For a year and a half he was too sick to have the surgery.

It was very tempting to lose heart and worry that he would not make it. I made the decision to put that precious baby in God's hands. It is amazing the peace that flows from such a decision. My faith was stretched, but it grew—not only did my faith grow, but the faith of my entire family.

My grandson had the surgery, did very well and will be officially diagnosed completely cured within six months. His heart problem will not even be considered a pre-existing condition! The marvels of modern medicine—the marvels of God who created the human mind that could conceive of such miracles in the healing arts! Hopefully the experience to grow in faith will strengthen me for the next time I am called to rely on its power in my life.

#2. When I am not diligent in my commitment to prayer and my baptismal responsibility to live as priest to serve God's people, prophet, to proclaim God's word in word and deed and king to lead people to Christ, I can easily slip into boredom and worse amnesia. The Christian life calls me to be diligent and focused. There are times that I long for a return to the early days of my awakened conversion—the outward passion was palpable. My constant prayer is that God renew that passion in me. It is indeed renewed every Holy Week when I reflect on the Paschal Mystery of Christ—his life, passion, death and resurrection. The challenge is to keep that passion alive throughout the year. Daily prayer and meditation on Christ's profound sacrificial gift of self is the only way I am able to sustain that fervor.

#3. The greatest gift we have been given is the resurrected presence of Christ in the Eucharist. It is what strengthens us as we wait for Christ's return. The sacrifice of Calvary, Christ's ultimate saving event is made present to us every time we approach the Lord's Table. I am especially aware of that truth when I receive Christ's precious Blood. When I drink from the cup I pray that Christ's life literally run through my veins--through me out to the world. When I participate in the life force of Christ present in the Eucharist I am able to go out and become Christ in the world. It is especially important in my life as I bring Christ to a child who cannot come to the Lord's Table because of illness. In some very small way Eucharist strengthens me to strengthen him and to be Christ's life in and for him.





## Connecting Liturgy with Catholic Doctrine

Possible doctrinal themes that flow from this week's  
Liturgy of the Word and Eucharist

*Faith*  
*Morality*  
*Moral Decision Making*  
*Salvation*  
*Eschatology*  
*Cross and Paschal Mystery*

*Symbol of Bread and Wine*  
*Eschatology*  
*Jesus Christ*  
*Revelation I or II*  
*Eucharist Series*

Other themes may be chosen as well--choose from the scope and sequence chart and create your own connecting statement. The following statements make the appropriate connections between the doctrinal issue you have chosen and the liturgy of the day.

### FAITH

Today's entire liturgy is a catechism on faith—that it is a gift, that we must have it, and that Christ sustains it. The entire liturgy remembers salvation history and the faith of the people of Israel followed by the faith of steadfast Christians. Life without faith in God is meaningless. Thus, today's liturgy exhorts us to increase our faith in God. The focus of our extended doctrinal session will be FAITH.

### MORALITY

Today's first reading is a call to live the moral life. It is a call to remember the promises made to Abraham that we would be his heirs—called to be righteous and holy in God's eyes. The concern in the Book of Wisdom is that the people were losing their religious identity—they were being influenced by pagan influences. It is very easy to succumb to such temptations. Commitment to the moral life is a way we maintain our religious heritage and identity. Thus the focus of our extended session today will be MORALITY.

### MORAL DECISION MAKING

Today's first reading is a call to live the moral life. It is a call to remember the promises made to Abraham that we would be his heirs—called to be righteous and holy in God's eyes. The concern in the Book of Wisdom is that the people were losing their religious identity—they were being influenced by pagan influences. It is very easy to succumb to such temptations. Commitment to the moral life is a way we maintain our religious heritage and identity. In order to remain faithful to that commitment we must make correct and right moral choices. Thus the focus of today's extended doctrinal session will be MORAL DECISION MAKING.

## **SALVATION**

Today's liturgy echoes our entire salvation history—from the saving event of Israel and the deliverance from bondage in the Exodus event, to the deliverance of our lives through Christ's death and resurrection. Today it is an opportune time to reflect on what the Church teaches about our salvation in Christ. Thus, the focus of today's extended doctrinal session is SALVATION.

## **ESCHATOLOGY**

Jesus' parable is a reminder to us to be ready for the coming of Christ. If we are ready each day of our lives, we will be ready to meet the Christ who comes in glory. Thus, today would be an appropriate time to focus our attention on what the Church teaches about ESCHATOLOGY, HEAVEN, and HELL AND PURGATORY.

## **CROSS AND PASCHAL MYSTERY**

We are saved through the cross of Jesus Christ. We are invited to enter into Christ's passion, death and resurrection as we live out our salvation here on earth as we await Christ's return and our ultimate salvation in the hereafter. That mystery is made present to us in every Eucharistic celebration. It is alluded to and echoed in today's Gospel. Thus, today and every Sunday would be an appropriate time to reflect on the CROSS AND PASCHAL MYSTERY.

## **SYMBOL OF BREAD AND WINE**

The Eucharist is alluded to in today's Gospel in the reference: "Amen, I say to you, he will gird himself, have them recline at table, and proceed to wait on them." Luke wants to communicate that Christ's risen presence is still with them when they celebrate the Eucharist. Thus, today would be an appropriate time to reflect on the SYMBOL OF BREAD AND WINE.

## **REVELATION I or II**

Jesus reveals his intimacy with his Father as he continues to invite disciples into deeper relationship with God. The entire Gospel is revelatory—that is, it seeks to reveal God to believers. Today would be an appropriate time to focus our attention on REVELATION.

## **EUCCHARIST SERIES:**

Our premier celebration of the Paschal Mystery—the life, passion, death, resurrection, ascension sending of the Spirit is made manifest and re-presented for us in the Eucharistic liturgy. Today we will focus on part \_\_\_\_ of the Eucharistic Series.